



Building an online community takes time, and much like yoga, it requires community members to develop habits and a practice of consistent and regular engagement – which may not feel intuitive right off the bat. We are looking forward to engaging in this important work together, and we can't wait to see your contributions.

Rhythms, Routines – and a Little Yoga

BY ROBIN MATROSS HELMS

ONE OF THE THINGS I ADMIRE MOST ABOUT community college trustees is the multiple hats they wear. While at ACCT we know them best in their role as board members, it's wonderful to learn about what our members do in their "day jobs" and other service engagements. I love hearing details about their professional and personal roles and interests, and how they intersect with and inform their community college leadership work.

Outside of my own "day job" at ACCT, a primary interest and extracurricular occupation for me is yoga: I have been practicing yoga for over two decades, and teaching since 2008. I currently teach two classes per week at a community-based yoga studio in Arlington, Virginia.

As is the case for community college trustees, I too find that my



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various roles and responsibilities intersect in sometimes unexpected but always fulfilling and interesting ways. During the height of the pandemic and all the stress that came with it, I was tapped with some frequency to teach brief yoga sessions as part of remote work meetings — 10 minutes of breathing and stretching to let everyone take a pause and regroup in the midst of many hours spent online and on camera.

At the July ACCT Board of Directors meeting in San Antonio, I had the opportunity to lead a brief in-person yoga session for our hard-working — and as it turns out, very flexible! — board members. It was at the end of a productive day of deep and impactful conversations — just a few minutes of simple yoga postures and slow, steady breaths. It was great to feel the calm energy that settled over the room, and it set the tone for continued good work the following day.

Every time I teach a yoga class, I relearn the power of simple movements and breathing. In yoga, we often practice the same sets of postures over and over. Part of their power is the routine and the sense of rhythm and flow in moving through familiar poses with breath. Finding that flow, familiarity, and “mojo” is certainly not unique to yoga. The ACCT board had a chance to see it in a stellar performance by student dancers from Chair Rose Benavidez’s home campus of South Texas College, who traveled five hours to San Antonio to join us. Artists, writers, athletes, and practitioners of all sorts of crafts and hobbies can relate to the sense of being “in the groove” when things are zipping along and feeling on track.

A year into my time at ACCT, I feel like the membership and educational services team is coming into that groove. Building on the deep expertise and experience of our seasoned

veteran team members and incorporating the perspectives and insights of our newer members, we’ve figured out how to work together, support each other, and amplify everyone’s talents and contributions. This summer, we’ve rounded out our team with the addition of two excellent new staff members. Ronald Barnes is our new membership services associate, and Maggie Owens joined us as educational programs and events associate. With our full team in place, there’s a sense of rhythm to our work — we’re building and improving processes and routines that work, and ensuring we’re consistently serving our members.

Our next frontier for creating routines and finding a rhythm is with ACCT Connect. We are thrilled with the enthusiastic response our new online learning and networking platform has received so far — our members are creating logins, completing their “welcome checklists,” accessing resources such as the Governance 101 course, and interacting with each other. However, building an online community takes time, and much like yoga, it requires community members to develop habits and a practice of consistent and regular engagement — which may not feel intuitive right off the bat.

There are a few concrete steps that I’ve found helpful in developing my ACCT Connect “practice”:

1) I adjusted my notification settings. There are lots of options, including in-the-moment notifications and daily digests, and you can set what sorts of notifications you want to receive via your profile page. In order to build my ACCT Connect routine and remind me to check in regularly, I’ve maxed out my notifications so that I get one any time there’s new activity on any posts I’ve made or am

following. For now, it’s not overwhelming, but as more of our members join and there’s more activity, I can always make adjustments to my notification frequency once my ACCT Connect routine is well established.

2) I downloaded the mobile app from my profile page. Like many of us, I’m on the go, so it’s helpful to have access to the app on my phone. It has also allowed me to add quick ACCT Connect checks to my routine — like when I’m on the bus to and from work.

3) Because I’m a list maker, I’ve made ACCT Connect a recurring item on my daily to-do list. I also keep an eye out for articles and information I’d like to share with our members, and keep a list of them for creating posts. It’s nice to have a relatively easy item I can check off from my list every day!

Our staff is standing by to help if you need assistance with any of these items, or anything else as you develop your ACCT Connect practice — email connect@acct.org any time, or send us a direct message through the platform.

We’re continuing to add new content and resources, and we welcome your suggestions and contributions! It’s great to be finding our rhythm and routine together, and we appreciate your engagement as we find our groove. And who knows? Maybe I’ll even teach an ACCT Connect yoga class one of these days. Stay tuned!



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